

As the Chair noted, today this subcommittee meets to review the FY2021 budget requests of the Bureau of Land Management and the Forest Service. Together these two land management agencies manage roughly 20 percent of the land in our nation. That percentage is considerably higher for those of us West of the Mississippi River.

In my home state of Utah alone, the BLM and Forest Service manage over 30 million acres, which amounts to roughly 57 percent of the state and in my district, some counties are over 90% public land. As a former Mayor, it is hard to imagine only having control of 10% of my city, but these rural counties work hard to combat the unique problems facing their communities.

I highlight these numbers to emphasize the magnitude of the influence these agencies yield. Both operate under similar multiple use and sustained yield missions which emphasize balance in land use planning among the competing values of energy development, timber harvesting, grazing, recreation, hunting, fishing, and a variety of other uses. The decisions made by

these agencies have very real impacts on our environment, our economy, and on our communities.

I welcome the opportunity to examine and discuss the priorities put forth in the President's 2021 Budget request. While the budget process provides valuable insights into the priorities of the Administration, it is Congress' job to make spending decisions. An important part of the Natural Resource Committee's oversight responsibility, and of this budget oversight hearing, is to review problem areas and make tough decisions.

The agency requests being discussed here today reflect the administration's responsibility to strike the right balance of conservation, sustainable use of natural resources, active resource management and expanding access to public lands.

This budget request is also paired with a number of legislative proposals that offer bipartisan opportunities. Both agencies continue to seek to Congress's help in addressing the ongoing wildfire crisis impacting our nations forests and rangeland.

The BLM and Forest Service have collaborated on a proposed package of commonsense reforms, including categorical exclusions under NEPA to expand proactive forest and fuels management in order to reduce catastrophic fire risk, improve forest and rangeland health, and improve safety for wildland firefighters.

Catastrophic wildfires need to be taken seriously. In the last ten years, there have been an average of 67,000 wildfires annually that have burned an average of roughly 7 million acres a year.

To put that number in perspective, 7 million acres is roughly 250,000 acres larger than Massachusetts. These fires have also brought deadly destruction to several communities throughout the west with over 200 tragic deaths in the last 10 years alone.

I support the proposals put forth in this budget proposal to improve forest and rangeland management. It is vital that we responsibly manage our forests and rangelands, and I look forward to hearing about the ways our land management agencies intend to use their existing authorities to achieve these goals, as well as

some of the additional tools that they believe are necessary.

I also commend the commitment both have shown in this budget to managing the lands currently within the federal estate as well as the continuing push to address the growing maintenance backlog plaguing our federal land management agencies. I feel confident that this is the year we will finally provide much needed relief to our public lands infrastructure, which is crumbling under a nearly \$20 billion maintenance backlog. Roughly \$6 billion faces the two agencies before us today.

As is the case with all budgets, there will be items that not everyone agrees with. Proposed cuts to programs, differing priorities. I do, however, want to commend the agencies for putting forward responsible and strategic visions for the future of our public lands. Republicans on this committee are ready to work on these areas of shared interest.

I want to thank Chief Christiansen and Deputy Director Nedd for being here today and I look forward to hearing your testimony. Thank you, and I yield back.